



For Immediate Release

Contact: Peggy J. Baggett
Executive Director
peggy.baggett@arts.virginia.gov

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804/225-3132

Masterpieces of American Dance

Masterpieces of American dance are coming to small cities and rural areas across Virginia. With special funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Virginia Commission for the Arts, the Richmond Ballet will tour a special program of masterworks by renowned American choreographers George Balanchine, Agnes de Mille, and John Butler.

The U. S. Congress has appropriated special funding to tour American Masterpieces across the country. In Virginia this funding will make possible a tour by the Richmond Ballet to 10 Virginia communities. The people in these communities have had few opportunities to see the best works created by these legendary American choreographers without traveling to major cities. In addition to the public performances, the Richmond Ballet dancers will conduct master classes and lecture-demonstrations for area schools.

Now in its 23rd season as a professional company, the Richmond Ballet performs for more than 75,000 Virginians each year. The Richmond Ballet is the only dance company in Virginia with permission from the George Balanchine Foundation to perform the Balanchine works.

Under the artistic leadership of Stoner Winslett the company performs full-length classical works, such as *Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake*, and *The Nutcracker*, as well as new works by contemporary choreographers.

The Richmond Ballet, the State Ballet of Virginia, has been touring throughout Virginia for many years. The special funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Virginia Commission for the Arts will make it possible for the company to take the bigger dances in its repertoire to smaller communities.

George Balanchine was born in Russia and toured Europe in the 1920s with The Ballet Russe. He made his way to New York where he introduced the concept of ballet to the Broadway musical in such works as *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* and *On Your Toes*. He and Lincoln Kirstein organized the Ballet Society in 1946, which became the New York City Ballet, one of the finest companies in the world. Mr. Balanchine was one of the most prolific and sought-after contemporary choreographic geniuses. His work changed the nature of ballet around the world. Mr. Balanchine died in 1983.

John Butler, a native of Mississippi, worked with the top stars of the dance world. His ballets are in the repertoires of the foremost international companies, including the New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, the Joffrey Ballet, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, the Paris Opera Ballet, and San Francisco Ballet. He choreographed the first ballet performed by Baryshnikov after his defection. He coached the Richmond Ballet in both his works in its repertory before his death in 1993.

Agnes de Mille began her dance career in 1929 and danced in theatres across the United States and Europe. After her retirement from performing she began a long career in choreography and was one of America's most beloved dance innovators. In addition to such classic works as *Rodeo* and *Fall River Legend*, she created innovative work for some of the biggest Broadway hits, including *Oklahoma*, *Carousel*, *Brigadoon*, and *Paint Your Wagon*. In 1981 Richmond Ballet commissioned a new work from her, *Inconsequential*, and she coached the company from her wheelchair. She received numerous awards before her death in 1993.

The Richmond Ballet will tour *After Eden* and *Carmina Burana* by John Butler, *Allegro Brillante* and *Who Cares?* by George Balanchine, and *Inconsequential* by Agnes de Mille.

Communities interested in taking advantage of this special tour should call the Richmond Ballet at 804-344-0906 or visit the website at www.richmondballet.com.

The Virginia Commission for the Arts is the state agency that promotes the arts across the Commonwealth through grants and other services. The Virginia Commission for the Arts is funded by the Virginia General Assembly and the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency.

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